

A
LETTER
FROM A
FRIEND

IN
Abingdon,

TO
A Gentleman in LONDON.

CONCERNING

The Election of Burgesses for the ensuing PARLIAMENT.

SIR,

I Have yours of the 1^d. of this Month, and find you are Big with Expectation what the Issue of our prolong'd Election will be. In pursuance of your request, as well for preventing all false Reports, as for your own private Satisfaction: I do hereby give you the true, impartial and just Account of the whole Series of our Election for this Town; which was on *Saturday* the 6th of *September*, 1679. That day there was a very great Appearance in the Town of Gentlemen of Quality on both sides, long Expecting the Summons of the Mayor to the Hall, till near Eleven a Clock, his Proclamation being for 8. The Candidates for our Election were Sir J. Stonehouse of Radley, and M. Dunch of Pussey Esq; The General Cry of the Town was a *Dunch*, a *Dunch*; but the Mayor not being willing to determin the Election by View, the Poll was granted, which lasted 3 hours or more, the Voices on Sir J. his side were 171; On M. Dunch's side 297, the Majority, 126. On the Close of the Poll the Court was adjourned till 3 a

A

Clock

Clock in the Afternoon, about which time the Mayor and his Brethren met in the Council-Chamber to debate the Election; they were very full of Queries, being altogether ignorant of the Constant practice of former Elections, as also of the Nature and extent of their Charter, which hath made and constituted them both a Burrough and Corporation at the same time; a hundred years or more; ever since the Reigne of Queen Mary, and is both by Charter and Custom a Popular Election. But, who so blind as they that can see, but will not see? or who so unnatural as those that do violence on themselves? But give me leave before I conclude my Relation, a little to divert you with some pleasant Occurrences before and since the Election. The Election of our Knights for this County was on Monday the 24th of August 1679. where the Sheriff did declare before several Persons, (being urged to deliver the Precept into some private hand) That he would not, durst not do it, by reason of an Order of Council, requiring the Expedition of all Elections: But that he would, the very next day deliver the said Precept into the Mayor's own hand, which accordingly he did in the Presence of several Witnesses, who then thereupon took occasion, to desire Mr. Mayor, That the Election might be on Eryday or Saturday following which had been Legal, and is usual notice to all persons concerned. All his Reply was, He must Advise with his Council where we must leave him for near 3 weeks. The whole design of this delay Modestly judged, by indifferent, sober persons on the One side, to increase the Expence and Charge of the said *M. Dunch*, and on the other hand to Disengage his Party from him; To Instance you in a few particulars, Three Considerable Persons in the Corporation, (or at least so reputed) took a List of all those Persons names that were Tenants to the Town or Hospital, and some few days before the Election went to them severally in the Name of the Mayor, Bayliffs and Burgesses, desiring them to Vote for Sir J. promising them great Immunities if they would, and withal threatening them severely if they would not: And told them, That they should be raised in their Fines, and taxed at greater Rates then they were before, and to some said, They should never renew their Leases any more. But finding this hook not to take, they resolve on Harsher Terms, and *Interrorem* they arrest and Imprison several that they knew would Vote for Mr. *Dunch* upon divers pretences, some the Mayor pretended disobeyed

disobeyed his Authority, though I hear little or no reason for it; Others for Old Dormant and Inconsiderable Debts, due to the Corporation; but observed, not one, of the many Debtors that promised to Vote for Sir J. though more in number, and far more Considerable summes due from them, were in the least molested. But for Brevity sake I shall now return to the Poll, where it was Observed, that one Cavelling Person made in his business to Quere almost all *M. Dunch's* Voices, and being asked why he would offer to Quere such and such Credible and substantial Persons, he Answered, He would Quere them for Luck sake, out of opposition; and for their own Advantage: Which in truth was a Bold Assertion of their Passionate Speeches given out by some of them Long before the Election, That if *M. Dunch* had 100 Voices and Sir J. but 6, they were resolved to return Sir J. not knowing but that Thirteen might be more then One and Twenty, and thereby Prejudging the Justice of the next Parliament. About 8 at night of the Election Day *M. Dunch*, with some of his Friends, went to the Mayor then in Council with his Brethren, to demand a Return according to Law, finding the Majority on his Poll: The Mayor Adjourned his Answer till Monday Morning, on which Day *M. Dunch* came into our Town again, accompanied with at least 100 Horse and near two Hundred Foot of his Electors, in a very handsome and decent order, Unanimously Crying a *Dunch a Dunch*. The Mayor and his Brethren being then in Council could not agree, finding the great odds upon the Poll, so that they Adjourned again till 5 in the Afternoon; When met, the Mayor declared to his Brethren, That he had Examined the Poll and found that the Number 171 was greater then 297, and therefore declared Sir J. their Burgess. One of the Bailiffs asked him how he could make that out, He gave no other Answer, but that he was very well satisfied in what he had done. Whereupon *M. Dunch's* Friends being much dissatisfied, withdrew, having first Protested against their Illegal Proceeding. But I shall observe one thing to you, by the way, That whatsoever Declaration was made, was privately in the Council Chamber among themselves, and not Publickly in the Town-Hall, where the Precept was read, as the usual Custom of the Town hath been upon all their Elections, and as it is supposed the Law directs for the satisfaction of the Electors what Person is their Burgess: Whereupon the Women and Children conceiving

conceiving a General dissatisfaction, Hissed the Mayor home to his own House, Crying a Cheat a Cheat. The next Morning M. Dunch's Council drew up an Indenture under the Hand and Seals of his Electors; And went to tender it to the Mayor to have the Common Seal Affixed to it; but the Mayor was denied. But at length was observed to go into the Town-Clerk's house: Immediately M. Dunch with his Council and some Friends went thither, where he was denied also, Notwithstanding several of the Neighbours affirmed, That he was but just gone in. The Mayor having notice given him, by one that was set to watch; so great was his Guile and Panick Fear, that he went forth at the Back-door of the House and so over a High Wall, where he secreted himself amongst the Nettles; and kept himself incognito all that day, and the next, until M. Dunch and his Council were gone out of Town.

This is a true and short account of what things (at present) comes into my Memory concerning our Election. I may Possibly at my next meeting give you a more particular and larger Account of the whole. In the mean time I rest,

Your Faithful Friend

A. B.

POSTSCRIPT,

It is to be particularly observed, that every Papist in Abingdon (except one who gave no Voice) Poled for Sir J. and all the Neighbouring Papists used their utmost Endeavours to carry on his Interest. Especially one of a very great Estate was heard to say, He would not for 1000 l. but that Sir J. should be our Burgefs.

FINIS.